vative in its approach to cancer prevention, but that there had never been a government cancer policy which had actually functioned. . . . The essential problem . . . was the 'hodgepodge of laws' produced by a succession of Congresses each of which had different theories about how to deal with carcinogens . . . thus the strangely small number of carcinogens which had ever been regulated."

This points up a serious weakness of this book. Miss Efron's devotion to explaining the scientific debate with which she is concerned is enormous, and nobody can accuse her of hiding the arguments of those with whom she disagrees. She has performed a major intellectual *tour de force.* But she never really explains what was happening in the real world while the debate she chronicles was going on. There is little reference to the bitter battles fought in courts and before regulatory bodies and to the manifold ways by which American industry, in most cases, helped avoid the worst possibilities that could have flowed from the doctrines and legislation she deals with. She does not even mention the case of saccharin.

Those persuaded by Miss Efron's evidence will conclude we have been saved by probably undeserved good luck. But what is worrisome is that the press failed so abysmally to present an accurate picture of the flim-flam that was being sold the American people. Moreover, by the author's own testimony, a number of outstanding authorities in this field agree with her conclusions but are so terrified of the consequences of saying so publicly that they have requested anonymity for their support. Presumably, their fear arises because the "regulatory scientists" hand out research grants and thus have a convenient means of punishing offenders against the party line. No one can read *The Apocalyptics* and ever again have the childish notion that American science is a machine devoted solely to pumping out truth for the public good. In this case it turned out to be a machine dedicated in large—but not exclusive—part to justifying the political and cultural presuppositions of some influential scientists and their political allies.

In a surprising section at the very end of this book, Miss Efron seeks to exculpate the media for their role in promoting this charade. The reporters were just repeating what their sources told them and they hadn't had the chance Miss Efron had to spend years studying the documentary record, she argues. But the American media make a religion of skepticism, of trying to show up all sources of authority in the White House, Congress, and corporate suites, to say nothing of the medical, legal, accounting, and other professions.

No, in a curious way the failure of the media to penetrate the deception practiced upon us all is the central question raised by Miss Efron's important book. It is the basic assumption of a free press that in an unfettered marketplace of ideas where all may speak and be heard, good ideas will drive out the bad and the public weal will be served. This clearly did not happen in this case, and this reviewer, for one, wonders whether Miss Efron's book will get the exposure and debate it deserves.

Read it. You'll like it. Even more important, you'll learn a great deal that will be important and useful to you.

And ponder how it was possible for the fable of a terrible cancer epidemic ahead to be sold the American people precisely in a period when all the relevant government data showed that the American people as a whole were getting healthier each year and living longer on the average than ever before. But ponder too the question of the responsibility of American industry in all this, responsibility arising from the careless way it used to dispose of its wastes and the disgraceful conditions under which many workers labored only two or three decades ago when they were handling asbestos and chemicals that were at least potentially harmful. □

IN THE PATH OF GOD: ISLAM AND POLITICAL POWER

Daniel Pipes/Basic Books/$22.50

Martin Kramer

Islam no longer strikes blind fear in the world. The more violent acts of fanaticism, from Sadat's assassination to Shiite self-detonations, still shock. But radical Islam seems to have stalled alongside its Iranian standard-bearers in the forbidding bogs of southern Iraq. After an inspired counteroffensive, Iran's beturbanned military minds seem to have dispensed with the science of war altogether; so intent are they upon praising the Lord that they have often neglected to pass the ammunition. And what is religious fervor without elementary logistics?

So while Iran's juggernaut to Jerusalem inches through an Iraqi swamp, there is time to ponder the fortunes of Islam these last five years. There has been no further Islamic revolution, some Islamic terrorism, and a lot of Islamic verbiage since the West first began to wring its hands over resurgent Islam. A vast Western literature of explication also has accumulated, leaving not a single mad mullah whose scribblings and table talk have not been pored over by analysts. Mercifully, the early apprehension about a tidal wave of revolution has given way to a subtler appreciation of the assorted men and movements that claim to champion true Islam. *In the Path of God* is just such an appreciation, distinguished by the further merits of readability and comprehensiveness. Daniel Pipes has searched the depths of specialist writing on behalf of the general reader, to produce a reliable guide for the perplexed.

And a guide is needed. To follow the debate within Islam is an exacting task, for the discourse is conducted largely in symbolic language. When Khomeini reviles America as the "great Satan," the sense is clear enough, but most of his imagery is specifically Islamic, and even narrowly Shiite. Qaddafi's utterances on Islam are far beyond the comprehension of all but a few diligent mortals. Those with less fortitude understandably cannot fathom how these ideas can survive in the harsh climate of modern skepticism. The difficulty, then, is to interpret Muslim views for those unfamiliar with the idiom of Islam without losing the evocative power of the original symbolism. This Pipes has done. He has resisted a widespread tendency to translate Muslim self-expression into social science jargon as unintelligible as any mosque harangue. His unadorned interpretation strikes a judicious balance between faithfulness to sources and clarity of presentation.

Observes Pipes: "It may be difficult to imagine in the late twentieth century, but Islamdom long predominated over its rivals in power, in wealth, and in culture." The present predicament has its origins in Muslim recollections of lost grandeur, to which Pipes devotes the first part of his book. Past preeminence bred a Muslim pride in military self-sufficiency and a justified cultural conceit. There was little to be learned from unbelievers, who were held in contempt for their ignorance of obvious theological truths (as well as their repelling uncleanliness). Then, with the precipitous rise of the West, descended what Pipes calls Islam's "nightmare": "Once active, Islamdom became reactive; once a leader, it became a follower; once an integrated civilization, it became ruptured. Military defeat and cultural subjugation resulted in the collapse of the old Muslim complacency and a massive crisis." Pipes frequently invites us to empathize with Muslim grief over the loss of world primacy, and he does so without indulging in Toynbeean self-flagellation over the West's alleged responsibility for the disarray of Islam. "Premodern Muslims were uniquely insular, able to ignore the innovations, ways, and beliefs of unbelievers," and their heirs paid dearly for an arrogance that lasted too long.

Those burdened by this legacy have wavered between accommodation and resistance. While the West reigned supreme and confident, Muslim Westernizers could make a compelling case for dismantling much of the old order, and importing ideas and institutions. Their methods were often heavy-handed, and opposition was driven into the mosques or underground. But as the tide of Western hegemony ebbed, and Muslim cash flow improved, the fundamentalists grew bold again. Pipes provides a catalogue of the challenges which they have posed, in a chapter consisting of some fifty country-sketches. Although the impact of the resurgence has been uneven in these very different settings, the net effect has been to sanctify resentment of the West.

This has meant that the fundamentalists have spent a lot of energy tilting at windmills. After all, the West has withdrawn from most of its forward positions in Muslim lands, and all but a few Muslim peoples exercise their right to self-government or misgovernment. Intervention has been ineffective, and acts of provocation such as the Iranian hostage episode and the Beirut bombings have demonstrated the West's vulnerability. Nonetheless, a belief in the malicious omnipotence of the West remains a widespread affliction in the abode of Islam. Consider that when the Great Mosque in Mecca—unmolested by foreigners even during imperialism's heyday—was

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seized by a group of Muslim extremists in 1979, a rumor ripped through the Muslim world that the desecration was an American plot, hatched by that nefarious foe of Islam, Jimmy Carter; the American Embassy in Pakistan was put to the torch by an enraged crowd, with loss of life. How does such a rumor gain irresistible momentum in the absence of one shred of evidence? Many are the Muslims who have never conversed with a foreigner, but who will swear that there exists a vast Western conspiracy to prey upon them. They believe that their misfortunes are wrought by men in distant, secret corridors; their imaginations are peopled with invisible agents manipulated by hidden hands. Here the stuff of cheap spy thrillers passes for certain truth, and faith shares minds with the vision of a world tightly run by the CIA and international Zionism.

Yet it has not been the West that has borne the brunt of Muslim wrath. A heightened Muslim sensibility has underlined the differences that divide Muslims, and has set one variety of Islam against another. Pipes relates how Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Iran have built rival Muslim networks of influence, which ruthlessly compete for the allegiance of committed Muslims everywhere. Here Pipes is at his very best, describing the calculating methods used by each contestant to undercut all rivals. Not surprisingly, he has found that these various groups will stop at nothing to advance their irreconcilable claims to religio-political authority. And the competition is fueled by money—money to smooth conversions to Islam, to build mosques, to subsidize Muslim opposition groups, to defame other pretenders. So taken is Pipes with this finding, that he concludes that the oil shock delivered by Muslim producers to Western consumers was decisive in prompting the resurgence. With overflowing coffers, Saudi Arabia and Libya could indulge in ambitious campaigns to export their versions of Muslim political activism; Iran could afford to pursue utopia and a costly holy war. Pipes posits a direct link between the vicissitudes of Islam and the price of oil.

Now vast oil wealth has raised income and aspirations to dizzying heights, and has changed the way some Muslim peoples live and think. But let it be confessed: More is known about the rings of Saturn than about the relationship of oil wealth, social distress, and Muslim activism. That these states are bidding against each other with oil money is undoubtedly true, and in this club the bids run high. But this competition has been a response to a rising popular mood, not its cause. Thus there is an unwarranted boldness in the author's predictions. He declares the resurgence "fortuitous and transient," due simply to "freak circumstances" created by windfall revenues. Should the present oil glut continue, the oil states will run growing deficits and the pace of development will be slowed or halted. "The power of Saudi Arabia and Libya will fade as their disposable funds diminish and the two countries return to their former inconsequential isolation." Iran's influence also "is fated to end." The fundamentalist state "is doomed; as the Khomeinist regime falls, non- or anti-Islamic forces seem likely to take its place." Then the "Islamic alternative, once so full of promise, will lose its appeal and many Muslims will again regard their religion as an obstacle to progress." Fate! One of the hazards of immersing oneself in this material is that one begins to think in its categories.

Allahu a'lam—God only knows. Disillusionment has set in, but events well within the realm of the possible—war, revolution, subversion, or foreign intervention—could breathe a second wind into the resurgence. The Islamic regime in Iran, *pace* Pipes, has been

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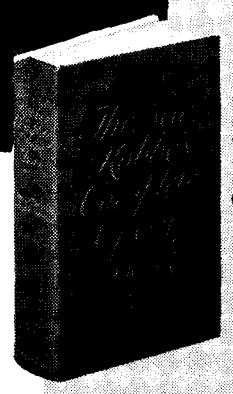

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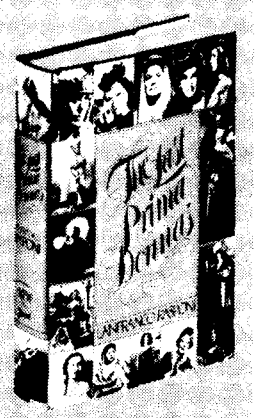

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strengthened, not weakened, by the tribulations of war. The revolution has crushed or dispersed its opponents from within, and has repulsed the Iraqi invader from without. A Persian Gulf crisis—it takes no imagination to imagine one—could send Islam's stock soaring once more, enticing many Muslims down off their fences. That is a possibility that the West simply cannot afford to dismiss, for fate may tarry. □

A COUNTRY SUCH AS THIS
James Webb/Doubleday/$17.95

John R. Dunlap

"Why is everyone lying around like cowed puppies, peeing on their own tummies?"
—Big Red Lesczynski

In modern fiction, popular acclaim and critical acclaim jibe infrequently, so it's exciting when a new author comes along who attracts both. James Webb is such an author—a popular novelist whom critics can't ignore, despite his penchant for coherent plots, genuine heroes, and the celebration of virtues which, in the root sense of the word *virtue,* are manly as well as admirable. His first novel, *Fields of Fire* (1978), tells it as it was in Vietnam, seen through "minds unfogged by academic posturings": i.e., Marine Corps grunts, most of whom learn to be dependable even as they prefer to be anywhere else. His second novel, *A Sense of Honor* (1981), chronicles six hectic days in the lives of Annapolis midshipmen and junior officers, during which a wavering plebe must work out an answer to a blunt question proffered by an energetic first classman: "Are you bigger than your goddamn self?" Ignoring a modern preference for literary sludge, both novels nonetheless drew kudos from critics. Webb is popular, all right—but how could the critics fault his shrewd perception and his near flawless craftsmanship?

One might cavil at portions of Webb's third novel, *A Country Such As This.* The cultural detail, though lush and resonant, clunks now and then with some off-key dialogue: e.g., the accent of a Japanese whose English is inconsistently broken (advancing within six pages from the preposterous "You are surprise I speak your ranguage" to the perfect "General MacArthur came to Yokohama after he landed at Atsugi" back to the labored "You go Korea soon?"), or the anachronism that butts into the raw diction of a Korean War serviceman (in the early 1950s, American males didn't yet speak with ironic passivity of "getting laid"). But the few linguistic blemishes quickly fade amid the exuberance of Webb's narrative and the ambitious sweep of his plot.

A Country Such As This tells of one generation in the life of a country James Webb loves; a story of America's great leap, well, sideways: from reluctant world power assuming terrible responsibilities in 1951 to worldweary democracy about to articulate its *Weltschmerz* with the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976; a sprawling, boisterous, tender, violent, sad, funny, agonizing tale of the good and the bad, the lovely and the ugly, the great and the small in a nation of grand ideals and grandiose uncertainties. That's quite a haul, even for 534 pages, and even for James Webb, who—true to form after *Fields of Fire* and *A Sense of Honor*—misses little detail yet wastes few words.

Webb secures a tight pace by channeling the sprawl of his narrative through the tributaries of three principal characters, classmates at the Naval Academy. On Graduation Day in 1951, Judd Smith, Red Lesczynski, and Joe Dingenfelder—inseparable as midshipmen—look forward now to separate choices of assignment. Juddsonia Smith, a Virginia hillbilly of Celtic-Indian stock, is the wild one, eagerly anticipating his commission in the Marine Corps and a combat tour in Korea; Stanislaus (Red) Lesczynski, Polish-American and Catholic, is the proper one, due shortly to marry his Sophia before entering Naval flight school; and Joseph Dingenfelder, Jewish and vaguely intellectual, is the sensitive one, ready for a Navy-sponsored stint at MIT. At their last meeting at Mario's Bar in downtown

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